

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

1. (Cancelled)

2. (Cancelled)

3. (Cancelled)

4. (Cancelled)

5. (Currently amended) A method of connecting a plurality of tunnel clients to a plurality of tunnel servers using a tunnel designator, the method comprising:

using said tunnel designator to receive a request from one of said tunnel clients;

determining if said request is a valid request from one of said tunnel clients;

determining if said request is for a new tunnel, and

if so:

(a) opening a new tunnel to a selected one of said tunnel servers; and

(b) modifying an address map in the form of a mapping table to include information associating said selected one of said tunnel servers to said request, said association to said selected one of said tunnel servers fixed until the connection session is complete;

if not:

(b) using said address map to route said request to a mapped tunnel server.

6. (New) The method of claim 5 further comprising:  
using an evaluation processor that evaluates tunnel traffic before the tunnel traffic distributor distributes the tunnel traffic to the tunnel servers.
7. (New) The method of claim 6, wherein the evaluation performed by the evaluation processor includes at least performing security functions on the tunnel traffic.
8. (New) The method of claim 5, wherein:
  - (a) the evaluation processor establishes a VPN tunnel by, in part, associating each VPN tunnel with characteristics of tunnel traffic for that VPN tunnel; and
  - (b) the tunnel traffic distributor operates in part based on the associations, without involvement of the host applications.